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How long before US global military madness provokes another 9/11?

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THE UNITED STATES has suffered three widely acknowledged military disasters since the end of the Second World War: in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq.

The American public responded to each crisis by electing new leaders with a mandate to end the wars and avoid new ones.

But in each case, our new leaders failed to make the genuine recommitment to peace and diplomacy that was called for. Instead, they allayed the fears of the public by moving American war-making farther into the shadows, deploying the CIA and special operations forces in covert operations and proxy wars, sowing seeds of violence and injustice that would fester for decades and often erupt into conflict many years later.

Six months after taking office, President Eisenhower signed an armistice agreement to end the Korean War. But three weeks later, he unleashed the CIA's first covert operation, to overthrow the elected government of Iran. The nationalization of Iran's oil industry was reversed and US oil companies gained a substantial share of Iran's oil production. Problem solved, right? Not exactly -- the US coup and its support for the Shah's despotic rule led to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and a hostage crisis at the US Embassy. Now the long-term breakdown of diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran threatens to explode into a new American war.

A year later, the CIA followed up on its "success" in Iran by removing another elected leader, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman of Guatemala. The coup rescued United Fruit Company's ownership of

42% of the agricultural land in Guatemala from Arbenz's modest efforts at land reform, but the 42-year civil war that followed killed at least 250,000 people.

The US defeat in Vietnam led to ten years of relative peace, in which the US avoided open warfare anywhere in the world. But once again, this concealed what senior US military officers have called the "[disguised, quiet, media-free](#)" approach to war in Central America and Afghanistan. Proxy forces armed with American weapons and supported by small numbers of American "advisers" once again plunged millions of people's lives into chaos.

In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the political parties the US fought in the 1980s have eventually won elections and come to power anyway. And in Afghanistan, *mujaheddin* that the US armed and supported in the 1980s produced the most dramatic act of "blowback" ever on September 11th 2001, plunging America into a decade or more of war, economic crisis and global chaos that we have yet to find our way out of.

President Obama fulfilled the US commitment to withdraw from Iraq that the Maliki government wrung out of the Bush administration, and he stopped the CIA from kidnapping people and bundling them off to Guantanamo. But even after his much-vaunted "withdrawal" from Afghanistan, there will still be twice as many US troops there as when he took office. And he halted the parade of men in orange jump suits stumbling off American planes into the tropical sunshine in Cuba, not by restoring the rule of law, but by ordering the extra-judicial execution of terrorism suspects -- a national policy of cold-blooded murder.

Not a week goes by without news of US drone strikes in Pakistan or Yemen, but the US also conducts assassinations by helicopter-borne special forces like the ones who killed Osama Bin Laden. The former head of Special Operations Command (SOCOM), Admiral Eric Olson, told an [Aspen Institute conference](#) that SOCOM conducts a dozen such operations every night in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The total number of night raids in Afghanistan escalated from twenty per month in early 2009 to [over a thousand per month](#) two years later, and senior officers admit that [at least half of them target the wrong person or house](#).

Sixty thousand US special operations forces now conduct assassinations, night-raids, training missions, joint operations and exercises in [120 countries around the world](#), twice as many as when Obama came to power, with deployments in about 70 countries at any given time.

In *The Politics of Heroin*, Alfred McCoy described how the CIA formed secret alliances with Nationalist Chinese generals in Burma and Thailand, Corsican gangsters in Marseilles, Afghan warlords, Haitian military officers, Manuel Noriega in Panama and Nicaraguan Contra commanders. In every case, the CIA's partners exploited their impunity as US allies to become major players in the global drug trade. Now former Mexican special forces trained at Fort Bragg and Fort Benning run the Zetas drug cartel, and the [new police chief](#) installed by a US offensive in Kandahar province in Afghanistan in 2011 reportedly earns [\\$60 million a year from opium smuggling](#).

The current expansion of US special forces to conduct covert and proxy warfare sacrifices US long term interests in peace, stability and the rule of law for short-term political gain, just as

when US "advisers" were sent to Vietnam in the 1950s and to Central America and Afghanistan in the 1980s. But which of the 120 countries where US special forces now operate will become the next Vietnam or Iran or Guatemala?

Could it be India, which holds [50 joint training exercises a year](#) with US forces, the most of any country in the world, as it battles separatists in Kashmir and Assam and a "people's war" by Naxalites or Maoists in 7 other provinces?

Or what about Uganda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Djibouti or Kenya, where US forces are training African Union "peacekeepers" to fight the Al-Shabab militia in Somalia? Or the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic or South Sudan, where US special forces have been sent to track down Joseph Kony but are suspected of planning a covert war against Sudan?

The pervasiveness and perversity of America's military madness could produce severe "blowback" from any one of the 120 countries where US special forces now operate. So how will we respond when the inevitable blowback comes? Will we once again fall in line as our leaders lash out at some new enemy? Or will we know enough of our own history to look in the mirror and recognize the real source of the violence and chaos that our irresponsible leaders keep unleashing on the world?